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Montana Film Office Receives International Honor for Film Incentive Project

Helena, MT — September 30, 2005 – The Montana Film Office, Department of Commerce was the recipient of an Honorable Mention for *The Big Sky on the Big Screen Act: A Film Industry Incentive* project by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC). IEDC's professional economic development awards annually recognize excellence in the economic development profession. "We are incredibly pleased to accept this high honor from the IEDC," said Sten Iversen, Manager of the Montana Film Office. "It is rewarding to see our work to increase film production and improve Montana's economy get international recognition."

Competing in the Cluster-Based Strategies category involving communities with populations exceeding 200,000, the Film Office and ArtsMarket Inc., a Bozeman-based national cultural research and development firm, were clear standouts, winning the honorable mention - one of only two cluster-based research awards in the international competition - with *The Big Sky on the Big Screen Act: A Film Industry Incentive*. The Montana Department of Commerce commissioned ArtsMarket Inc., to produce an economic assessment of the impact of the film industry on the Montana economy, and then, co-authored a recommendation for legislation based upon the research. This led to the crafting of House Bill 584, The Big Sky on the Big Screen Act, which was signed into law May 17, 2005. The legislation's purpose is to spur an increase in film production in Montana, leading to millions more in direct expenditures in the economy; create more jobs for Montana workers, by encouraging and rewarding the employment of skilled Montana film crews and university graduates; and increase tourism. Another by-product of the film legislation was the creation of the Montana Film and Television Advisory Council, which was designed to furnish advice and recommendations to the Governor, the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity and the Department of Commerce Film Office. Adds Iversen, "we are very excited relative to the pro-active approach by Governor Brian Schweitzer and the establishment of this newly created advisory council."

"Economic development pursuits have always played an invaluable role in strengthening the nation's economy one locality at a time, and as our country faces challenges ranging from an elevated national debt to a declining yet still significant unemployment rate,

these efforts take on an even greater importance," said Steven J. Budd, IEDC Chairman. "The awards highlight pace-setting organizations in economic development, such as the Montana Film Office, Department of Commerce."

The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) is headquartered in Washington, DC. Its mission is to provide leadership and excellence in economic development for communities, members and partners around the globe.

From 1998-2003, Montana's film industry generated \$53 million in film production spending within the state. Film production created 903 full-time equivalent jobs in the film industry and 444 full-time equivalent jobs in the general economy. During those five years, the film industry contributed \$4.3 million of tax revenue to the state.

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